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April 2, 1952

Mr. Laetus Becker




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Dear Mr. Becker:

A second reading of the interesting essay confirms my judgment that it is a purely theoretical evaluation based on information available to any student of the subject. The characterizations conform strictly to the typical current "outside" rationalizations. The analysis of roles is nine parts typical "outside" theory and one part guess. One guess seems to me fantastic. One important assumption contradicts, by implication, the best "inside" information now available. The essay seems to be an attempt to cover everything from now forward in the Communist-Capitalist struggle - without really saying anything that you can put your finger on as a clue to a single predictable future move on the part of the persons discussed.

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Sincerely yours,



WH:mt

*Details when I come
down if you want
them.
Rw H.*

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*Reading
11/11/1952*

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BECKER

20 March 1952

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SUBJECT: Comment on [REDACTED] of 5 March 1952,
"Events Leading up to a Split in the
Soviet Communist Leadership."

1. The subject document is unusually interesting. The probability of the existence of tensions and cross-purposes within the Politburo has long been recognized, but with the exception of past purges and questionable cases, such as that of Zhdanov, which, if they ever existed, have been resolved, our knowledge of their actual existence, nature, points at issue and groupings of personalities is, as far as I know, a complete blank. If the content of this document is reliable, its intelligence value is very high and could well have a major effect on our planning and action. I do not believe that it merits such credibility.

2. In general, the viewpoint and reactions attributed to the "opportunists" are much closer to orthodox Bolshevik thought than are those attributed to the "realists". I have no doubt but that it is possible, given sufficient knowledge, to group the Politburo into those who are inclined to favor more aggressive policies and those who would act less boldly. Such a grouping might also be a source of strain, but both groups would view things in the light of long-accepted central concepts, and the pattern of their divergences would depart materially from that set forth in this document. Neither group would hold the view that their own masses would not permit the use of atomic weapons (par. 55), and often the view attributed to the Realists as being in opposition to that of the Opportunists could not fail to be held by any good Communist. Sometimes, as in the supposed contrast between the USA and Socialists, (par. 58) the views of both groups are actually orthodox and can be held simultaneously in the Russian mind with no difficulty.

3. If a division as extreme as that which is portrayed existed, the so-called Opportunists would be very apt to brand their opponents as "opportunists" and themselves as "realists", for some of the more important views attributed to the Realists are so inconsistent with a very consistent Bolshevik pattern of thought that those who held them would be regarded as adventurers. Those aspects of Realist thought seem to me to be unnatural to a hard-core Communist (which must be a prerequisite for Politburo

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membership) and sometimes even un-Russian.

4. In the sense in which the Bolsheviks define the term, it would take some unaccustomed wishful thinking to consider the world situation ripe for immediate revolutionary action, even without the risk of war (6). No true Bolshevik, even if discouraged (and there is little to discourage them), could consider that all political means leading to final Communist victory had been exhausted (55), or seriously doubt that there would be time before 1954-1958 to take measures to interfere with a war initiated by the Americans (56). Nor would they consider that revolutionary intervention in favor of world Communism, as distinct from military intervention, has become so perilous as to constitute a major limitation (30 b), nor that aid to bourgeois Islamic feudal lords or any of the bourgeoisie, for that matter, need be unconditional (52).

5. The date of 1950 as one by which the recovery of the Soviet Union and the absorption of the satellites would have been achieved is not in accordance with realities, and would not appear so to even an optimistic Soviet mind (15). Much different views are continually given to the Russian people by their leaders, and one has only to live in Russia to know that the time element is much longer. I believe that major questions of policy are settled in the privacy of the Politburo, and not in the broader publicity of joint meetings with the Cominform and Chinese statesmen (23). There are ample means other than external adventures for controlling the chronic dangers arising from the inactivity of the Soviet Army and the failure of Soviet workers to obtain the promised benefits (14). I do not believe that the Soviet leaders have fallen into self-deception by coming to believe their own propaganda, but rather that they believe in the ultimate validity of its orientation and aims and are completely conscious of its (to them legitimate) distortion of supporting fact (14).

6. Many of these points seem to me to be very representative of viewpoints that are held by those who have not lived for long in the Soviet Union and are not familiar with its realities. They are part of the normal Western or non-Russian thinking. The explanation of Thorez' presence in Moscow as a make-weight for Eisenhower's presence in Europe (33) and regarding Korea as Stalin's first major politico-military error, together with its connotations (29a, 30, 60), seem to me to be non-Russian interjections. There is reason to believe that Russia's appraisal of atomic weapons is not consistent with the absolute weapon (2a). Especially noteworthy is the attribution to any hard-shell Communist of a belief that

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international problems could have been settled by their arguments at the Paris conference (9), and to Molotov's disillusionment (10). They just don't think that way.

7. Major considerations, notably problems of weaknesses and limitations of a peculiarly Russian nature, are completely untouched. In my opinion, the Politburo is well aware of them and they would profoundly condition the thinking of the Realists and be reflected in the issues under discussion. The problems that would arise in the minds of any responsible Russian are simplified out of existence. They know that there is more to overrunning Eurasia than a purely military capability (9c). Even when Russia is not directly involved, issues are over-simplified and a genuine schism would be more apt to cleave along other lines than those stated. This applies sometimes to the viewpoints of both Realists and Opportunists. Examples are the favoring of an attack on Tito (51), the reasons for calling off such an attack (33), the cleavage on further Chinese expansion (19), future action in Indo-China, Hong Kong and Formosa (53), and the policy towards the satellites (54). The realities involved, such as the intervention of the Seventh Fleet in Formosa and the fact that the Soviets are not being forced into either contrasting policy in the satellites, are missing.

8. Khrushchev is something more than a colorless careerist, for he is an expert industrial and political trouble-shooter and administrator. Russian officers have told me that Vasilievskii does not represent the Army, but is as much of a politico as Bulganin (60).

9. Among the minor inconsistencies and misstatements is that the satellites were exploited at the expense of devastated Soviet territory (2b), expectation of help from international Zionism (34), and US need to withdraw troops from Korea for the rearmament drive elsewhere (36).

10. Other explanations than those given sometimes seem to fit the facts and the situation better, such as the reason for Mao's visit to Moscow (20) and anti-Semitism (34). The Koniev plan for overrunning Europe may have existed (10), but it is a normal function of the military to make plans within the limits of their capabilities. Whether or not they are seriously considered for implementation is another question. It is probable that Kuznetsov and the old army chiefs do not always fully support Molotov (61), but this does not necessarily mean a Politburo split.

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11. The document is lengthy, and very much of it is not subject to these objections. Much of it can well be accurate. Even the grouping of personalities may be true, but if so it would be on different issues and different platforms. A doubtful point which seems to be capable of authoritative independent intelligence checking is that regarding Communist strength among the Indians of Guatemala, Ecuador, Brazil and Chile (47). A genuine schism might arise on the subject of military security versus ideological security in Germany (50), and there is undoubtedly more than one opinion on how best to exploit Communist gains and successes (5). I believe that it is very true that no firm decisions or blue prints have been made by the Politburo, and that that has a continuing impact in the satellites, including China, and in the little Politburos of all the Communist parties of the world (64). I do not believe, however, that there is any fundamental struggle in the Politburo for acceptance of a Plan with a capital "P", but that instead the Russians will continue to be opportunists and adjust themselves with a high degree of flexibility to whatever comes as they have in the past, without changing their basic Communist aims, intentions and orientation.

12. This document, in my opinion, is an able and probably sincere effort of a central European to construct what goes on in the Politburo, based on rumour, gossip, and information which is probably classified. I do not think that any such individual has access, classified or otherwise, to what really goes on in the Politburo. Too much of the document is not understanding, sincere Communist, and too much of it is in conformity with Western patterns of thought rather than Russian. It is recommended that the alignment of individuals, but not their supposed viewpoints or powers, be kept in mind as a possibility.

13. Since preparing the foregoing, I have read the very able analysis done by CIA's organization [REDACTED], which takes into account external rather than internal evidence. The only comment I have to make on that analysis is that it may lay too much stress on the discrepancy between the announced role of the Cominform and the role implied in the document under discussion. It would not only be contrary to Communist training and doctrine for the Cominform to adhere to its publicized functions, but most of those particular inconsistencies disappear when one accepts the high probability that the influential members of the Cominform can and will continue to function in a broad area as Communists under a different hat. In any event, [REDACTED] strongly reinforces the conclusions which I have drawn above.

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